

# MEDREGION UPDATE

Regional Office Tunis

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## MEPI in 2010— apply for a grant!

- The Tunis Regional Office has around \$2 million to support grants in the region.
- Make this the year to become involved with your community...and MEPI activities!



The Kingdom of Morocco hosted the 6th Edition of the Forum for the Future (FFF) on the 2nd and 3rd of November 2009 in Marrakech. The FFF, co-chaired by Morocco and Italy in its capacity of President of the G8 for the current year, was attended by Foreign Affairs Ministers of the BMENA, G8 and other partner countries as well as representatives of international organizations, civil society and the private sector.



*The Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Forum of the Future Marrakech 2009*

The FFF is a joint initiative of the countries of the BMENA and the G8. It was launched at the Sea Island G8 Summit in the United States. It brings together leaders from government, civil society and the private sector to exchange ideas and form partnerships to support progress, reform, and expanded opportunities for the people of the region.

The sixth FFF was energized by the presence of the Secretary of State Mrs. Clinton who reiterated the U.S. intention to support civil society. She reaffirmed the commitment of the United States to broad engagement with Muslim communities

around the world and outlined concrete steps the United States is taking to follow up on the "New Beginning" that President Obama launched in Cairo. Secretary Clinton focused on partnerships to promote civil society, entrepreneurship and economic development, educational opportunity, scientific and technological collaboration, women's empowerment, and interfaith cooperation.

Participants repeated their pledge to the principles of democracy, emphasizing the importance of the broad and representative participation of citizens in public life. They welcomed the significant steps achieved since the first FFF

and the progress reached by the countries in the reform of education and women's empowerment and steps taken on sustainable human development. Consensus among participants means that the Forum for the Future framework offers great potential for dialogue to address political, economic and social reform among its members. Civil Society representatives called for the need to further strengthen the partnership spirit between Governments and Civil Societies of the region and welcomed the continued support and commitment of the G8 to the FFF process.

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They urged Governments to further reinforce democratization, as well as political and economic freedoms, to ensure prosperity, sustainable stability and security.

Participants reviewed the reports issued by the three thematic workshops held in preparation of the Marrakech Forum. Representatives of civil society governments, and international organizations who attended the three workshops addressed issues related to the global financial crisis, democracy and local governance, and human security concept. The outcomes of the Beirut, Rabat and Doha workshops made a major contribution to the 2009 Forum for the Future and to the Democracy Assistance Dialogue (DAD), which refers to the principles of partnership and dialogue between Governments and civil society enshrined in the "Partnership Document". While reaffirming their conviction that any political reform process must come from within, participants encouraged initiatives aimed at reinforcing local governance as a means to promote democratic societies characterized by pluralism and unity. To this end, they encouraged closer cooperation between local and national authorities, with a view to strengthening democratic capacities, promoting best practices and enhancing inclusiveness in public life, particularly for women and young people. They also stressed the importance of fostering initiatives promoting education and empowering women. In that regard, they welcome the initial U.S. and UAE

funding for the BMENA Gender Institute (suggested by civil society) that will make grants, conduct research, and promote scholarship related to gender issues.

The Forum acknowledged the need to address and to further define the concept of human security. The forum encouraged initiatives to reinforce national civil protection systems and populations' preparedness for disasters, both natural and man-made.

Participants strongly stated their commitment to invest in young people and adopt policies and programs that will expand their economic opportunities, increase their social engagement and allow for meaningful participation in decision-making activities and civic life. They also called for more partnerships in the education and vocational training fields and encouraged further cooperation of partner institutions and universities from the G8 and BMENA countries. They invited the development of exchanges and research programs. They underlined the relevance of providing education leading to key qualifications and competences, active labor market participation and open access for all to lifelong learning opportunities.

Finally, participants reiterated their commitment to promote the FFF process and expressed their strong support for the upcoming co-chairmanship between Qatar and Canada, as the 2010 President of the G8, and welcomed Qatar's commitment to hosting the next Forum for the Future in 2010.



*By the MEPI Grants Unit*

Most of us are not very familiar with the rules and regulations that govern US Federal Assistance awards. These so called "cost principles" can be confusing and

deserve to be consulted regularly by people managing the finances of the recipient organization. This column is meant to provide some guidance on the most commonly misunderstood aspects of grant rules encountered during financial reviews and to help managers and bookkeepers put in place procedures to prevent owing the US Government for disallowable costs. Let's tackle, for starters, professional services:

The rules that apply can be found in ***The Code of Federal Regulations: Part 230 on Cost Principles for Non-Profit Organizations***. Appendix B- Selected Items of Costs: item 37- Professional Services Cost. These rules specifically prohibit organizations from hiring their employees or officers, such as directors, as contractors. It happens, though, in the course of a project, that an organization mistakenly hire their own employees or officers to provide some contract training or consultancy work. This is prohibited and the organization will find these costs are not allowed. The organization will have to pay back the US government for these expenses.

This is because contracting fees by hour are typically higher than salaries for employees. Paying an officer or employee a higher salary or a fee in addition to their salary creates a conflict of interest. Obvious conflicts of interest should be avoided.

You might ask, what if an officer or employee has a very specific knowledge or skill that makes their contribution essential? In these cases the organization can still take advantage of the of the person's capabilities. If they are an officer, the organization can list them as employee listing their contribution as a salary. If the person is an employee, it is possible to include the services required in their job description and allocate more of their time in the project. (There are "cost principle" rules for overtime too, but lets leave that for another time.)

For your reference here is the full text of the 2 CFR Part 230: Cost Principles for Non-Profit Organizations (OMB Circular A -122) - Appendix B: Selected Items of Costs - 37: Professional Services Cost:

*"a. Costs of professional and consultant services rendered by persons who are members of a particular profession or possess a special skill, and who are not officers or employees of the non-profit organization, are allowable, subject to subparagraphs b and c when reasonable in relation to the services rendered and when not contingent upon recovery of the costs from the Federal Government. In addition, legal and related services are limited under paragraph 10 of this appendix. ..."*



## Young Arab Leadership Program: Students Council Activism:



Young Arab Leadership Program (YAL), project targets secondary school students aged 14-17 and recent high school graduates to build multidisciplinary leadership skills through youth programs that encourage them to think globally, act locally and work toward constructive change within their local communities.

theater, leadership training, volunteer work, and public events.

The second stage of YAL focused on developing networks and building relations and partnerships with local NGOs, civil society, and academia as an avenue toward empowering young leaders. The intent of these networks is to empower youth to make positive change in their local communities.

Jama'ah, or Arab Center for the Development of Community Leadership in the Arab World, which implements the YAL project, identified and recruited youth from schools and selected volunteers to serve as facilitators of the project for students. Initially, YAL formed leadership groups in each participating school. These groups focused on raising awareness in their schools about crucial issues effecting their communities. By enlisting the students in supervised volunteer programs and community-service with NGO's the leadership groups fostered change-oriented attitudes and developed abilities in the target students. This framework achieved successes for a wide range of projects.

Students have shown real enthusiasm and coveted membership in the leadership groups. From the outset, Jama'ah implemented project activities in eleven schools and community centers and reached over 2000 young Palestinians through a wide range of programs from educational

YAL conducted study days to bring together representatives of local organizations and students to discuss NGO's role in social change. One of the participants said: "These people and organizations could not come together under any other roof" This cooperation is another example of how Jama'ah is growing into an important actor in the field.

### Activities Within Participating Schools :

One of the high schools, Iksal, started by organizing a public event for 200 young Palestinians in which they addressed issues such as relations between adolescents and their parents, communication difficulties, promoting greater understanding between generations and advancing children's rights in school and at home.

Alqasemi High School, conducted a workshop that dealt with identity, rights, commitment, involvement and leadership. YAL has been so



*A training workshop session*



enthusiastically embraced in Alqasemi students have established six leadership groups.

Jatt Cultural Center had students go through twenty workshops in an intensive process of learning empowerment and implementing projects

### Educational Theater

The educational theater was omnipresent in the different

activities run by the leadership schools. It has been a winning tool in raising awareness, developing talents, studying relevant issues, and exposing their audiences to important issues facing their communities. Theater performances have dealt with a diverse variety of issues such as, polygamy, violence and the situation in underserved villages. The audiences include school staff, pupils and their families.



## MEPI: Supporting Home-Grown Efforts to Develop Democratic Practices

By Peter Mulrean *(The last of four articles serialized from the Foreign Service Magazine)*

The fundamental objective of MEPI has not changed since it was launched in December 2002: support the efforts of local groups from the Middle East and North Africa to develop or reinforce democratic practices in their countries. Our strategy for achieving this objective has been adjusted over the years, however, based on the lessons learned on the ground. Five years after the founding of the MEPI Regional Offices, we would like to share a few of those lessons with you.

### Sustainable Reform must be Home Grown

We knew this from the start, but the concept is reinforced to us almost every day. There is no single model of democracy, nor is there a magic formula for developing a democratic system. Democracy is an organic process and societies must experiment until they find practices and processes that ensure fundamental

democratic principles (e.g. freedom of association and expression, the rule of law, people's selection of its government) in a way that fits with local cultural and societal traditions.

### Local Actors are Key

Our experience with Local Grants and other MEPI programs shows that the most important reform actors are local organizations. They understand the situation on the ground, can respond to opportunities quickly, and have the greatest incentive to persist in efforts to build a better future for their people. MEPI's effort over the years to build a relationship of trust with a network of committed reformers has been one of its greatest successes.

### Language Matters

There have been clear calls for more democratic practices

from the Arab world in recent years, usually expressed in ways that relate to people's daily lives and problems, such as "corruption," "equal access to jobs," or "fair treatment by judges." The challenge for MEPI has been to choose the right words to describe how we are responding to these calls. Sometimes, words like "freedom," "democracy," or "rule of law," can seem abstract or even foreign. Opponents of reform point to such terms as proof that the West is trying to impose an outside model of democracy on Arab society. It is important for MEPI and others use language with which the people of this region can relate. This will help demonstrate that MEPI is supporting home-grown efforts to develop democratic practices that are genuinely shared by our different cultures, such as justice and security.

### Outside Influence is Modest

Efforts to support reform by the United States through its policy and programs will ultimately have only a modest impact on building democracy in this region. The US is committed to supporting those who strive to spark democratic change in their own countries and to urging the governments to listen to their people. Such support can help, but will never be decisive. The responsibility for change lies with the people of each country.

The Obama Administration has reaffirmed the US commitment to supporting democratic reform in the Middle East and North Africa. This means that MEPI will be able to use the lessons it has learned over the years to expand cooperation with reformers across the region. We look forward to this continued engagement.

### MEPI Regional Office, Tunis

Housed at the U.S. Embassy in Tunis, administers MEPI local programs in Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, and West Bank/Gaza, and accounts for around \$2 million in program funding each year. In addition to coordinating with U.S. Embassies throughout the region, the Tunis RO organizes conferences (such as the Business Women's Summit and Student Leaders Alumni Conference), facilitates exchange programs (such as the Leaders for Democracy Fellowship program and the Students Leaders program), and provides a variety of funding opportunities (such as the MEPI Local Grants program and Civil Society Grants), as well as supporting visits, seminars, and training programs designed to advance reform.

**We are on the web!**  
[www.medregion.mepi.state.gov](http://www.medregion.mepi.state.gov)

### 2009 Picture Contest:

#### What Does MEPI Mean to You?

- Deadline to submit pictures is December 1st, 2009.
- Please ensure the participants you are photographing are aware that they might be featured on MEPI websites and in MEPI publications. You are only required to make sure the participants and implementers photographed know that MEPI might use the photo/video/quote in public materials.
- Each photo must include a date and attribution (who or what organization took the picture?).
- You must include a short paragraph for each photo, explaining why the image captures "What MEPI Means to You," and a short caption for each photo explaining who/what you have captured in the image.
- You must provide your name, nationality, contact information and which MEPI activity you were involved in.

For more details on the Photo Contest please visit our website at:

[www.medregion.state.gov](http://www.medregion.state.gov)

More questions? Email MEPI Public Affairs Specialist Kelley Osterthaler at: [osterthalerke2@state.gov](mailto:osterthalerke2@state.gov)